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ABSTRACT

The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia suffered a crisis of confidence in education in the 1980s that influenced their educational policy decisions. By examining these countries' educational concerns in the 1980s, this document portrays the national and international policy context that influenced school curriculum in that decade. After discussing the importance of societal and political context to curriculum reform efforts, political corporatism in relation to the economy and education is explored as the impetus for curriculum reform. Next, the responses of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to economic concerns are examined each in turn. A final section reviews the governments' use of curriculum as an instrument of public policy development to meet the needs of the nations' economies. (30 references) (CLA)

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THE POLICY CONTEXT

OF INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM

REFORM EFFORTS IN THE 1980'S

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INTRODUCTION

Reform efforts relating to the school curriculum were a prominent feature of educational policy making in Great Britain, the United States and Australia throughout the 1980's. These countries share much in common in terms of cultural heritage, political ideology and general social aspirations and it is therefore perhaps not unexpected that they would pursue a common path in relation to such a sensitive issue as the content and structure of what is taught in their schools. Yet in the 1980's there was a new element that dictated common policy responses and it is what Coombs (1985) has called "a crisis of confidence in education itself" (p.9).

In the United States the crisis was highlighted by the Secretary for Education when he asserted that "though our allegiance to quality education remains firm, our confidence in the ability of schools to realise that ideal has been battered by signs of decline : falling test scores, weakened curricula, classroom disorder, and student drug use" (Bennett, 1988, p.1). In Great Britain, the government's White Paper, *Better Schools* (Department of Education and Science, 1985) was unequivocal in expressing the view that "the standards now generally attained by our pupils are neither as good as they can be, nor as good as they need to be for the world of the twenty-first century. Schools should promote enterprise and adaptability and fit young people for working life in a technological age...high standards could be achieved by all schools rather than some". (p.2). In Australia, the newly appointed Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training was more oblique, perhaps in deference to his social democratic political orientation, yet equally as concerned about the health of the education system. He called for a "regular assessment of the effectiveness and standards of our schools" involving the "need to examine how our schools can report to parents and the community on their aims and achievements; how school systems can report on broader objectives, strategies and educational outcomes". He wanted to move beyond State boundaries to develop "a method of reporting to the nation on how well our schools are performing against established goals" (Dawkins, 1988, p.5).

What was the nature of this 'crisis' ? Was it, as suggested above, merely the old debate about educational standards? How did governments in Great Britain, the United States and Australia each respond to this general level of concern expressed across international boundaries? How might the responses of governments be understood from a theoretical perspective? How adequately did the resulting curriculum reforms meet the needs of the perceived crises? This paper will address these questions in an attempt to portray the policy contexts, both national and international, that were at work during the 1980's influencing the curriculum of schools.

CURRICULUM REFORM - PRIOR CONSIDERATIONS

Curriculum reform has been described as a type of educational reform that focuses on changes to the "content and organisation of what is taught" (Ginsburg, Cooper, Raaghu and Zegarra, 1990, p.475). Yet to focus entirely on the nature and intent of the reform itself might mask some important contextual factors. Carnoy and Levin (1975 p.43), for example, have pointed out that reforms of this type are limited or constrained by the social, economic and political context that gives rise to them. They have argued that unless educational reform efforts are consistent with the values and interests of the larger society they will not be successful. This leads them to the conclusion that :

> ...only when there is a demand for educational reform from the polity will education reform succeed.

While such a view would not go unchallenged by many educators, it serves to remind us that any study of educational reform must be firmly embedded in contexts outside of the somewhat narrow realm of education. This involves acceptance of the notion that education is very much a public policy issue - as much an instrument for local state and national policy development as for developing sensitive and caring relationships among young people.

Educational reform viewed as an instrument of public policy highlights the motives and objectives of governments rather than the intrinsic value of the particular reform effort. Ideally, in a democratic society, governments seek to mediate conflicting opinions and pressures in order to produce policies for the common good. Yet this mediation process can

often result in outcomes that favour dominant groups in society or simply self-interest on the part of a particular government. Thus at times the rhetoric of educational reform maybe more significant than the reality (Merton and Coombs (1977 ; Weiler, 1988; Ginsberg, Cooper, Raghu and Zegarra (1990). Educational reform, therefore, if it is to be properly understood, must be viewed in its broader ideological context. In particular, it needs to be recognised that educational reform efforts may serve as symbolic political gestures so that purely educational assessments of such efforts may mask their real intention.

Finally, some consideration must be given to the way in which the international context to be discussed in this paper influences local initiatives. Wirt and Harman (1986, p.4) have argued that national and international influences on educational reform interact so that "national qualities operate like a prism, refracting and adapting [global] influences, without blocking all of them". Ginnsberg, Cooper, Raghu and Zegarra (1990, pp.493-494), coming from a different ideological perspective, agree that it is necessary to try and balance national and international influences on reform :

> ...when we examine educational reform efforts in any country or region, we need to investigate how the global structural and ideological contexts constrain and enable individuals and group actors' transactions concerning education.....(while not ignoring) national-(regional-and local-) level cultural and political dynamics.

Such interactions are clearly complex and not amenable to any kind of simplistic analysis. Throughout this paper references will be made to international influences on national decision-making and these will recognise the problems of attributing cause and effect and the difficulty of unravelling direct and indirect relationships. In the end, judgments will be made about international and national influences on the curriculum of schools -judgments informed by an understanding of contexts and events that seemed to shape action on the curriculum throughout the 1980's.

THE IMPETUS FOR CURRICULUM REFORM : POLITICAL CORPORATISM IN RELATION TO THE ECONOMY AND EDUCATION

Political Corporatism

A number of writers has suggested recently that corporatist political theory has influenced the process of educational reform that took place in the 1980's (Rust and Blakemore, 1990; McLean, 1988). At the heart of corporatist theory is a strong role for central governments. The recent history of education in Great Britain, the United States and Australia might have suggested that more and more autonomy would to be granted to local level decisionmakers. The 1980's, however, made it clear that central governments were not prepared to preside over the fragmentation and disintegration of national educational effort. In contrast to the 1960's and 1970's, there was an assertion by governments of "the idea that state education is integrated organically into the nation state" (McLean, 1988, p.206). In this context, educational decisionmaking in the 1980's was not seen as the sole preserve of professional educators or educational bureaucracies but of governments that had much broader social, political and economic agendas to which education was expected to contribute.

While the government plays a central role in corporatist theories of the state, it does so in conjunction with other major players. It does not simply mediate conflicting interests as in a pluralist conception of the state and it does not merely respond to social tensions and economic problems as Marxists highlight (Rust and Blakemore, 1990). Rather, it purposively seeks to dictate policy outcomes that are seen to be in the 'best interests of the nation'. A strong version of corporatism would have governments directly intervening in private companies to ensure particular economic outcomes. A softer version would emphasise cooperation among government, employers, unions and other interest groups so that government objectives can be achieved with a minimum of disruption. This may involve a process of bargaining over specific policy outputs but the real outcome is commitment by all groups to the implementation of the agreed policy. (Sullivan, 1988).

Rust and Blakemore (1990, pp.502-503) have highlighted the structured nature of corporatism:

> Corporatism emphasizes the significance of interest groups rather than social classes or class conflict. But rather than competitive pluralism, a structured pluralism is portrayed in which the state acts with corporate groups in policy formation...government and private interests function as partners...In terms of education, professional groups in a corporate system not only work to gain sectional advantages but help maintain the system's authority and legitimacy as a whole.

Rust and Blakemore (1990) also talk about strong and weak versions of corporatism with the main differences being the degree of centralised control, the status of professional teacher groups, the inclusion or not of the private education system and the degree of continuity that desired educational reforms will achieve. Both versions of corporatist theory have attracted criticism from political theorists (Sullivan, 1988) yet the main tenet of corporatism, viz a powerful alliance between a range of interest groups, provides a framework in which the process of curriculum reform in the 1980's can be analysed. The framework is all the more interesting because each of the three countries under discussion has not traditionally been associated with corporatist state structures. Following Middlemas (1979), therefore, it might be more realistic to talk about 'corporate bias' in the development of curriculum policy in the 1980's rather than to infer the existence of corporate structures or corporate states.

The strength of a corporatist interpretation of curriculum reform efforts in the 1980's can best be demonstrated with reference to the needs of national economies. Control of the national economy is a central tenet of political corporatism (McLean, 1988) and during the 1980's in Great Britain, the United States and Australia there was general concern about future economic growth and competetiveness.

Levin and Rumberger (1989, p.209), for example, have pointed to efforts by all advanced industrial countries throughout the 1980's to maintain or regain "economic progress and competitiveness". The emergence of the European Economic Community as a single trading bloc, the rapid growth of newly industrialised economies (NIEs) such as Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Singapore and Hong Kong and the economic dominance of Japan has led not only to major reassessment of economic policies but of education policies as well. The

argument has been that if the traditional western industrialised countries are to compete effectively in the international market place they will need to develop a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. Such an argument has not been without its critics. Levin and Rumberger (1989) have amply demonstrated that the argument may have some validity in terms of the aggregate demand for skills. Yet they have shown that at either end of the occupational spectrum there is the possibility of both over-education and under-education for certain job categories. Nevertheless, the demand for a more highly skilled workforce became a significant policy prescription throughout the 1980's.

This line of argument was been advanced most assiduously by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Impediments to the development of a competitive edge for OECD countries (including Great Britain, the USA and Australia) were identified (OECD, 1989 p.17) : " high levels of unemployment and long-term unemployment; sluggish output and employment growth; sharp declines in manufacturing employment and expansion in service sector employment; intensified international trade competition; changing requirements within occupations; technological innovation permeating production and consumption". These problems were not seen as temporary aberrations in national economies but as medium term problems in need of fundamental structural adjustment if western economies were to be competitive internationally.

As a solution to the problem of structural adjustment, the so-called 'human factor' emerged as a prime consideration (OECD, 1989, p.18) :

> Whether it is the labour complement to technologically advanced, 'smart' capital equipment in the manufacturing sector or the very embodiment of productive capacity in the expanding service sector, the skills and qualifications of workers are coming to be viewed as critical determinants of effective performance of enterprises and economies.

Schools, traditionally criticised for failing to equip young people with adequate workplace skills, came to be seen as the location for significant reform if the economic needs of western industrialised nations were to be met. Education and training came to be regarded as micro-economic tools that could contribute towards effective control of the economy of the future. The perceived link between economic and education needs meant that education policy had to be aligned with economic policy. Such an alignment required new coalitions

and new ways of thinking about education if governments were to be successful in harnessing education to the economic bandwagon. It was in this context that `corporatist bias' can be detected in the approaches to educational reform in the 1980's. Governments either sought to create coalitions of interest groups that would support reform efforts and help to deflect criticism or they intervened directly to create new directions for education. The issues were seen to be too important to let pluralsim the agenda be hijacked by grants not committed to the education-economic nexus.

Supporting this nexus human capital theory emerged once again during the 1980's in recognition of "the growing knowledge-intensiveness of the pathways to sustained economic growth (OECD, 1989, p.20). This attachment for human capital theory was referred to by the Australian Minister for Employment, Education and Training in his address as Chairman of the OECD Intergovernmental Conference on Education and the Economy in a Changing Society (OECD, 1989, p.11):

> We accept, pragmatically, that the relationship between economic performance and human capital investment can never be measured with any precision....the vital question for this Conference is not whether education and training are a factors in economic growth and performance, but rather what needs to be done to improve their provision, by what means and in which directions, and where responsibilities for action should lie.

This kind of thinking was not simply abstract and theoretical on the part of policy makers - it had quite practical implications at the national level for the curriculum of schools as governments sought to solve economic problems with supply-side economic tools.

NATIONAL LEVEL RESPONSES TO ECONOMIC CONCERNS

United States

The United States has traditionally been viewed as pluralist rather than corporatist in its orientation. Yet there was not much evidence of pluralism as far as education was concerned in the 1980's. The Federal government's education agenda became very clear following the release of *A Nation at Risk* -to restore confidence in the nation's schools by improving academic standards and raising the quality of the teacher workforce. This agenda

was pursued relentlessly by successive Secretaries of Education. While Federal funding for education initiatives may have decreased, there was no mistaking the objectives and priorities of the Federal government in education. The 'bully- pulpit, rather than elaborate funding programs, was used as an effective platform to spread the message.

Yet the Federal government did not work alone in prosecuting its agenda. State governments sensed the need for action and across the nation, State initiatives in educational reform emerged throughout the 1980's (Pipho, 1987). Indeed the National Governor's Association made education a priority and saw the need for a new partnership (National Governors' Association, 1987, p.vi) :

> There is something else that Governors must do that takes them beyond the boarders of their states. They must help renew an historic relationship with the federal government. Recent American educational history is disjointed. The federal government once moved powerfully in this arena....The states now make the nation's education policy. But state leadership is not enough. We have to put rhetoric aside. We need each other...Governors must join those willing to link the energy of the states and localities and the federal government.

There were new partnerships at the local level as well- especially with the business community. Kolberg (AEC, 1987) has pointed out that educational reform in the United States in the 1980's was driven more by politicians and business executives than by educators. Campbell (AEC, 1987) did not go quite so far as this but nevertheless suggested that the results of the reform movement would have been much less had they not been supported by the business community.

There was, then, a political consensus between Federal and State governments and between State governments and business interests on the need for and the direction of educational reform. Governor Kean of New Jersey indicated the reason for such an alliance (National Governors' Association, 1987, p.v :

> ..the quality of education is intensely competitive..our trading partners remind us of this..When Governors visit Japan, Korea, and Europe to see the business leaders, we can't help but see something else -the commitment other nations make to education. Their questions-how to recruit and retain able teachers, how to improve the skills of the workforce, and how to enable citizens to achieve a fuller life-these are our questions, too. We take their commitment very seriously when we remember that their education systems already produce results.

This view has been supported by US businessmen so that James Campbell, Chairman of the Board and President of the Mississippi School Supply Company has argued that the "(United States') ability to compete, perhaps even to survive, as an industrial leader among countries depends largely upon our education system." (AEC, 1987, p.40). Bill Kolberg, President of the National Alliance of Business agreed with this view when he commented that "the quality of human resources is the key to competitiveness, to the United States and Australia and to every other country." (AEC, 1987, p.38).

The direction of education policy was not lost on the American left as Giroux's(1988, p.4) comments indicated:

> Much of what has passed for educational reform in the 1980's has represented a sustained effort by business interests and right-wing cultural elitists to redefine the purpose of public schooling, putting economic considerations first, and touting the alleged virtues of a 'unitary' western culture. In the first instance schools are expected to provide the skills necessary for domestic production and expanding capital.

Coming from a different ideological perspective, John Jennings, counsel for the Committee on Education and Labor in the US House of Representatives, seemed to agree with Giroux's analysis when he claimed that "economic competitiveness is the Sputnik of the 1980's" (Jennings, 1987, p.109). It remains now to review the outcomes of this new political and economic consensus on the curriculum of schools in the United States.

A Nation at Risk had criticised the curricula of US schools as being "homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose" (Bennett, 1988, p.14) The report recommended a set of "new basics" : "four years of English, three years each of mathematics, science and social studies, one half-year of computer science; and, for those students planning to attend college, two years of a foreign language." (Bennett, 1988, p.14). The new basics were, in fact, the old academic curriculum with the addition of computer science and the reappearance of foreign languages.

The US Department of Education reported that in 1982, only 1.9% of high school graduates completed a program in the 'new basics' but this had increased to 12.7% by 1987. Timar and Kirp (1988, p.29) have reported that by "1985 forty-three states had raised high school graduation requirements...; thirty seven had initiated statewide pupil assessment programs; seventeen had increased college entrance requirements; twenty five instituted academic recognition programs; and thirty four had created academic enrichment programs." Core graduation requirements in most states, four years of English, three years of social studies and two each of mathematics and science (Timar and Kirp, 1988) fell a little behind the demands of the 'new basics' but nevertheless substantially ensured the survival of the academic curriculum in the American comprehensive high school in the 1980's.

How was this curriculum related to the economic needs of the nation? It could be argued that mathematics, science computer science and foreign languages provide an important instrumental link to economic needs. Yet the point to note is that there was no radical shift to a vocationalised curriculum -the prescription for the 1980's in the United States was a general education, strongly oriented to mathematics, science and technology. Vocational education was left to those who could not handle the academic curriculum.

Great Britain

In 1976, the British Labour Prime Minister, Mr James Callaghan, launched the so called 'Great Debate' on education. At the heart of the debate, according to Dale (1985a, p.3) was the proposition that 'schools should emphasise the contribution of the economy to national life and prepare pupils to take their place in the economy as it now exists". While this was by no means a new proposition it did serve to reassert the link between schooling and economic needs. As Dale(1985b) has pointed out, it highlighted the inadequacy of existing curriculum provision and especially its relationship with the world of work. Chitty (1989, pp95-96) was more direct when he asserted that the groundwork was laid "to construct a new educational consensus around a more direct subordination of education to what were perceived to be the needs of the economy."

The Labour government did not last long enough to oversee such a reform and was replaced by a Conservative government in 1979. Yet, as Lawton (1989) has pointed out, this did not mean there was a break in educational policy directions. Rather, there was a continuity on the issue of seeking widespread curriculum reform. Indeed, under the Conservative government curriculum reform was given a high priority and its first substantial effort - the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative(TVEI) was designed not only to ensure that curriculum of schools was practical and relevant but that control of it was in the hands not of educators but labour market specialists. This was an assertion that new coalitions were needed in the 1980's to ensure the education economy nexus was maintained. If reform curriculum was to serve the needs of the economy, it had to be linked more directly to policy mechanisms that could guarantee an alignment between economic objectives and outcomes. Thus it was that for the first time in the history of Great Britain that a significant curriculum reform for schools was administered by the Manpower Services Commission - an unmistakable indication of the links that were seen between education and the economy and of radical processes that could be used to secure significant objectives.

TVEI has attracted a good deal of attention from writers concerned with the curriculum of schools (Dale, 1985b; Pring, 1986; Cattell and Norton, 1987; Chitty, 1989; Saunders and Halpin, 1990). Much of the comment has been favourable. Although the initiation process often comes in for criticism there seems to have been general support for the philosophy underlying it, especially its active learning pedagogy and integrated approach to learning. Yet, was it a major attempt to vocationalise the secondary school curriculum ? Chitty (1989) has argued that it was not since its target audience was for the less academically inclined. That is to say, TVEI was designed to vocationalise the curriculum for some students but not all. Chitty (1989, p.175) has called it 'a major vocationalising strategy' and the centre-piece of the Conservative government's education policy until at least 1985. Yet TVEI does not tell the whole story on curriculum reform - it seemed to be the first step in a vocational direction, it sought new coalitions, but it was a step which has apparently been reversed, at least to some extent.

The challenge to TVEI has come from the 1988 Education Act which, among other things, has prescribed, by legislative feat, a national curriculum for all schools in Great Britain. The national curriculum will consist of: foundation subjects(taking up 80-90% of curriculum time)- English, mathematics and science form the core with technology, a modern language, history / geography, art / music / drama / design and physical education making up the rest of the curriculum ; attainment targets will be set for each of the foundation subjects; programmes of study will be established for each subject with teachers free to determine details within these programs; and regular assessment of students against the prescribed attainment targets (Lawton, 1989). This represented a consolidation of the academic curriculum with rigid monitoring standards.

There have been severe reservations about the role of TVEI in this new framework (Chitty, 1989; Saunders and Halpin, 1990). Like the United States, Great Britain eventually returned to what it knew best in curriculum terms -an academic curriculum to help it achieve economic greatness in the twenty first century.

Australia

The Australian Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon. J.S.Dawkins, was the driving force behind shaping a new philosophical direction for the curriculum of Australian schools but he started somewhat later than his American and British counterparts. He took office towards the end of 1987 and soon issued *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins, 1987, pp.8-9) in which he made his position clear :

> A high quality basic education is an essential prerequisite for a vocationally skilled and adaptable labour force. More needs to be known about the levels of competence achieved by our students at school, especially in the core disciplines of language, mathematics and science...We also need to examine new ways to impart less measurable skills on which future prosperity depends -life-time learning, enterprise and initiative, pursuit of excellence, communication skills, team work and responsibility. In other words, we need to lay the foundations of a productive culture.

In a subsequent publication he focussed more clearly on his objectives for schools which he portrayed as central to the processes of economic and social adjustment being pursued the third Hawke Labour government (Dawkins, 1988, p.2):

> Schools are the starting point of an integrated education and training structure in the economy. They provide the foundation on which a well-informed, compassionate and cohesive society is built. They also form the basis of a more highly skilled, adaptive and productive workforce. As skill upgrading and retraining of adults becomes more necessary, so will the quality and nature of schooling received by individuals need to change. It will need to be more adaptable and prepare for, lifelong education. We need to ensure that every young Australian gets a general education of quality which provides both personal and intellectual development as well as broadly based and adaptable skills.

To achieve these ends, he proposed the development of a common curriculum framework "that sets out the major areas of knowledge and the most appropriate mix of skills and experience for students in all the years of schooling...(it would) emphasise higher general levels of literacy, numeracy and analytical skills across the nation...(it would) acknowledge Australia's increasing orientation towards the Asian and Pacific region...(it would) provide the guide to the best curriculum design and teaching practices...." (Dawkins, 1988, p.4)

It is one thing for a Minister for Education in a Federal system of government to propose wholesale reform of an area over which his government has no constitutional responsibility; it is quite another thing for his intentions to have any impact. Yet Mr Dawkins chose a strategy that can only be described as corporate in nature. He met on a regular basis with his ministerial colleagues from the each of the Australian states in a forum known as the Australian Education Council. From 1988 onwards he used this forum to secure ministerial agreement to the curriculum agenda he had outlined in *Strengthening Australia's Schools*.

There are several outcomes of this process to date and they are worth reviewing. On the one hand, Mr Dawkins has managed to get his colleagues to agree to a set of *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia.* In curriculum terms, this has meant agreement on the need to develop in all students :

- the skills of English literacy...
- skills of numeracy, and other mathematical skills
- skills of analysis and problem-solving
- skills of information processing and computing;

- an understanding of the role of society and technology, together with scientific and technological skills;
- a knowledge of Australia's historical and geographic context;
- a knowledge of languages other than English;
- an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts;
- an understanding of, and concern for, balanced development and the global environment; and
- a capacity to exercise judgment in matters of morality, ethics and social justice.

While this is not a remarkable list in curriculum terms, the fact that it was agreed on among eight State and Territory Ministers for Education and the Federal Minister is in itself somewhat remarkable. Yet the substance remains somewhat conservative -academic in nature with some leaning towards general problem solving skills and the environment. What is more there were no plans to implement the goals in any way - they were more a symbolic statement than a program of action.

The second initiative undertaken through the Australian Education Council mechanism was agreement on a series of what were called "curriculum mapping exercises". These were designed to review existing curriculum requirements across a range of areas. The first to be undertaken was in the area of mathematics. This was followed with others related to literacy, science and technology, human society, environmental studies and aboriginal studies. Even though a *National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools* has been produced as a result of the first exercise it is quite clear that these activities will have little, if any, impact on the curriculum of schools. For example, one senior officer of a State Education Department has indicated that it "could be used as a reference point for systems as they develop their own curriculum documents " (Eltis, 1989, p.9). This is by no means a 'national curriculum' as in Great Britain - simply an imposition on existing curriculum structures.

In Australia, therefore, while intentions to align the needs of education and the economy have been clear, efforts to achieve this through some kind of political consensus imposed by the Federal government have not been successful. Actions to date have been symbolic rather than real and any progress that has been made has been done so by the States themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

Governments in Great Britain, the United States and Australia all sought to respond to economic problems that emerged during the 1980's -problems that were international rather than national in nature. A part of the solution was seen to be forging strong links between the needs of the economy and education. In doing so, governments of different political persuasions (conservative in Great Britain and the United States and social democratic in Australia) sought to use the curriculum of schools to achieve their purposes.

In each country, the objective was seen to be so important that traditional methods of educational reform were rejected by politicians. In Great Britain, labor market bureaucrats were initially seen to be more trustworthy than either the Department of Education and Science or the Local Education authorities. Eventually, the government resorted to legislative mandate to achieve a national curriculum. In the United States there was a new partnership between the Federal and State governments and between State governments and the business community. In Australia, a purely political process through the Australian Education Council was used. In some senses, this might seem to defy corporatist theory since major education interest groups were excluded. Yet it in reality it was corporatism at the strong end of the spectrum that was being enacted. There was no room for compromise on the issue of curriculum reform so that traditional interest groups were discarded and new ones were put in place. A new constituency was created for curriculum reform in the 1980's - politicians themselves played a central role and the business community, especially in the United States, was not far behind.

Yet what about the nature of the changes to the curriculum itself? The curriculum of the 1980's was to be uniform rather than diverse; emphasis was to be on the core rather than options; and assessment of outcomes was to be a priority. Each of the countries reached different levels in this regard. Great Britain seemed to achieve the most concrete outcomes with its legislated national curriculum. The United States probably came next with State Governors working very closely together on specific reform initiatives. Australian governments had the best of intentions but achieved very little. Despite these differences, however, the basic academic curriculum is still very much in place in each of the three countries. If anything, reform efforts durng the 1980's have worked to entrench it even further. The extent to which such a curriculum can address real economic needs remains an issue.

There seems little doubt that during the 1980's education, and the curriculum of schools in particular, was reclaimed by the governments in Great Britain, the United States and Australia as an instrument of public policy development. A distinct corporatist bias can be identified in the actions of different governments as they sought to align the curriculum of schools to the needs of the economy. In general it was accepted that improved educational standards rather than fundamental curriculum change would win the day. The real challenge will be whether the traditional academic curriculum that has been further entrenched in each of the countries can deliver a satisfying an rewarding life to young people personally and to society as a whole.

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